GUIDE TO A DEVOUT LIFE

BY

REV. G. H. WILKINSON.

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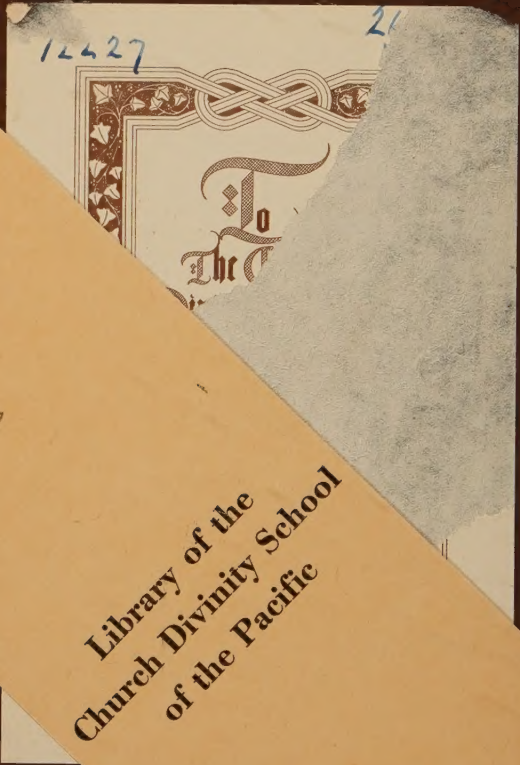

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Guide to a Devout Life:

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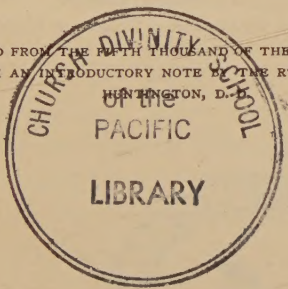
COUNSELS TO THE CONFIRMED.

BY

THE REV. G. H. WILKINSON, M. A.

REPRINTED FROM THE FIFTH THOUSAND OF THE ENGLISH EDITION,
WITH AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY THE RT. REV. F. D.
HUNTINGTON, D.D.



NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
31 WEST TWENTY-THIRD ST.
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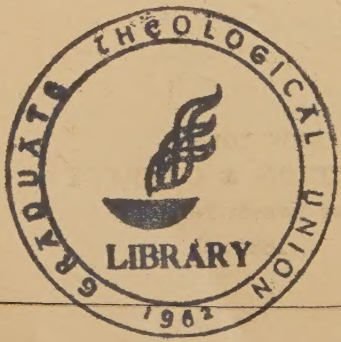

NOTE.

DEAR MR. DUTTON,

This work answers so admirably a common want of parish ministers, and fulfills so completely the promise of its title, that — as it seems to some of us who have read it — it ought to be offered to the American Church, and brought within the reach of all her children. I can hardly think of anything that I should wish to add to it, or take from it, or alter in it, as it stands. And I would gladly have its healthy and practical directions known to all the people of our Lord committed to my charge, especially to those just entering on the life of a chosen and confirmed discipleship.

Faithfully yours,

F. D. HUNTINGTON.

SYRACUSE, *May* 20, 1872.

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INTRODUCTORY.

THE following pages contain the substance of the teaching which was given at an Instruction Class held in St. Peter's Church, Eaton Square, during the summer of 1870.

The object of this Class was to correct that want of definite aim, and that absence of steady, persevering effort in the Christian life, which appear to the writer to be among the greatest defects in the religion of the present day.

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GUIDE TO A DEVOUT LIFE.

I.—Use and Abuse of Devotional Books.

WHATEVER books may be used in private devotion, the soul must do a great deal of work for itself. My object, in this "Guide," is to show you how to do this work.

Devotional books are useful in their way. (1.) As a help in beginning prayer, when we feel cold and dry. (2.) As a test of our own state of heart. For instance: when we read of holy men — not David only — saying, "My sins have taken such hold upon me, that I am not able to look up; yea, they are more in number than the hairs of my head," it may lead us to ask, if *we* have ever felt Sin in this way. And if not, whether there is not something *wrong* in

our religion. Or again, as we read the prayers of holy men who seem, like St. John, to be "lying on JESUS' bosom," and we know that there is no such joy and peace in *our* hearts, it may make us think, what deficiency is there in our religion?

But if any books, however good, come to be the whole of your private devotions, you will go wrong. Your soul needs feeding, if it has been quickened into life. When our Lord had raised Jairus' daughter, "He commanded that something should be given her to eat." And thus He commits the young Communicant to the Church, to be fed and nourished.

But this cannot be done by mere reading of devotional books. You must learn to read the Bible for yourself; to pray for yourself.

In these days, when so many beautiful "Meditations" are published, there is great danger of using them, *instead* of going through the hard, tough work of Prayer and Meditations and Bible-reading for ourselves.

None of them, however beautiful, will do instead of our own efforts, however poor those efforts may be. "In all labor there is profit." Our souls want bracing.

It is better to run the risk of making mistakes, than to depend on Classes, Lectures, and devotional books, and never bring your own spirit to bear on your Bible-reading, Meditations, etc., which is the habit of the present day. You must fight your own battle. No Lectures or books will do instead of individual grappling with difficulties.

Religious books are cramping, if we depend too much upon them. There is danger of becoming *unreal* — of saying what this or that holy man felt, not what *we* feel.

II. — Need of a Plan.

It is essential, at first, to have a Plan. You may be able to throw it aside some day; but you must begin by making a Plan for yourself. Write it down.

You will never fully understand Christian

liberty, unless you have learnt something of Christian bondage. You *may* learn the liberty first, and the bondage afterwards ; but you *must* learn *both*. "So speak ye, and so do, as they that *shall be judged by* the Law of Liberty." (St. James ii. 12.) The Day is near, when this life's opportunities will be over ; when, as we have sown, we shall reap ; as we have trained ourselves, we shall appear before GOD, one by one. (Rom. xiv. 10–12.)

III. — Principle of every Plan.

The exact PLAN, in itself, may be of little importance. No Plan, however perfect, will take you to Heaven, if your heart is not given to GOD. No Plan, however bad, will ruin you, if your heart is right with GOD. But it is infinitely important to keep in mind the grand PRINCIPLE of life : "SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD." And this you cannot do, unless — to some extent — you live by rule.

All our life long, we must honor GOD, by giving Him the *first* place in our arrangements for every day; and in order to do this — at least in the earlier stages of the Christian life, until *habits* of devotion are thoroughly formed — we need the help of Rules in detail.

"SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD." This is to be our guiding Principle. And this, in its application to daily life, will be, so far as possible, in arranging our occupations and pleasures (for *both* may be committed to GOD), to consider *first:* WHAT PORTION OF THE DAY CAN BE AND OUGHT TO BE, GIVEN TO GOD, THAT WE MAY SPEAK TO HIM, AND LISTEN TO HIM?

We may fail, again and again, in trying to carry out this Principle: but we must never give it up. When we have failed, we must honestly confess it, bring it to Him at once, ask Him to wash away the sin, and then begin the next day in a better, holier, more humble spirit.

In all your Plans, then, remember the great Principle on which they must be formed and carried out: "SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD."

Half our troubles come from not doing this. For instance: you go out to stay with friends, or to spend the day, and you leave it all to *chance*, as to what is to become of your prayers! And so — if you have learnt the value of prayer — you are miserable: you do not find the pleasure you expected, and you think you have lost your hold of GOD.

Now if you were just to take *five minutes over night*, quietly to think: "To-morrow, I shall be called at such an hour. My train (if you are going to travel) will start at such an hour. Could I get five minutes beforehand? Yes. Could I not get ten minutes? Yes, I think I could. And then at night? I shall be tired. But could I not find a few minutes for GOD on my journey, quietly, without any one observing it?"

There is so much want of common sense and planning in our religion! Five minutes reverently spent in this way, over night, will save you much disquiet and misery: it will often spare you the pain of wondering if you are among those who are Christians at home, and sinners elsewhere. We must be like the man of business who says: "I must hurry through this and that, to-morrow morning, — I must arrange my whole day, — so as to be free at night for that important Meeting."

The same principle can be applied, with obvious modifications, in the cases of those who are *obliged* to be much in society, and return home late; those who are nursing sick persons, etc.

Rules for the devotional life, though helpful in their place, must not be allowed to bring us into bondage. We must be willing, at any moment, to give up the Rule for the sake of the Principle, when a clear call of GOD'S Providence interferes with our usual plan. And as circumstances alter,

and experience increases, you will alter your plans from time to time ; asking GOD's help in so doing. LENT is the special time appointed by the Church for Self-examination, and therefore the most suitable time for all such changes. If you cannot see your way clearly, use the help which GOD provides. Ask help from your own Pastor, or from some other Minister of GOD's Word. And as you go on, part of the old system with which you started will be left behind ; part will be altered, to suit your fresh need ; and part, through gradual assimilation and sympathy, will become *your own*, till you forget which you have learnt from others, and which you have learnt under the direct teaching of the HOLY SPIRIT.

IV. — How to Form a Plan.

You will remember, that in beginning this "Guide," I pressed upon you the importance of *making a Plan* for yourself, in the devotional life.

If you have tried to follow out that teach-

ing, you may now need further help. It is difficult, just because it *is* so important: the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, will hinder you; and you may be tempted to give it up in despair. Let me then try to help you, by giving you a sketch of *Plans for Daily Devotion.*

Take the Plan which I suggest to you, if you have none of your own. If it suits you, use it to begin with, like corks for the swimmer. If not, alter it, seeking the help of the HOLY SPIRIT.

Each of you has a certain time, more or less, that you could give to Prayer. Say half an hour here, a quarter of an hour there; no two of you alike. How shall you divide it? How use it?

Always *leave a margin*, to allow for variations, for thoughts drawn out especially on some one point, etc. For instance: if you have half an hour, call it twenty-five minutes, before deciding how to divide it.

Now, what do you want to do in this time? You want to pray, to read your Bible, to meditate. Each of these is important, each is separate.

Suppose, then, that *when you rise in the morning, you at once kneel down, and yield your heart, and the day before you, to* GOD. Say to yourself: "GOD lives! GOD is giving me another day in which to serve and love Him — another day for which I must give account!" And then, with a "Glory be to the FATHER, and to the SON, and to the HOLY GHOST," give yourself up to do, and to bear, and to learn, all that He may ask of you during the day.

GOD knows what time you have. He divides to every man severally, as He will. He gives *hours* to one of His children; *minutes* to another: and He accepts accordingly. (2 Cor. viii. 12.) As children in the presence of a Father, let us arrange the time at our disposal as best we can.

You have already found out *how much* time you *can* give to GOD, morning, noon, night. Kneel down, and ask GOD to accept it.

In the Morning, say, you have an hour, or half an hour, or twenty minutes. Divide that time between Prayer and Meditation, and, if you have a whole hour, Bible-reading.

At Mid-day, you have half an hour, or only five minutes. Let this be given to Intercession.

In the Evening you have an hour, or half an hour, or a quarter of an hour. Spend it in Bible-reading, Prayer, with Self-examination, and reading some devotional book.

V. — Divisions of the Devotional Life.

1. PRAYER.

And now, imagine yourself alone, kneeling before GOD, at your hour for Prayer.

What is included in "Prayer"?

Five things : (1.) Confession of Sin, after Self-examination. (2.) Thanksgiving. (3.) Praise. (4.) Asking. (5.) Intercession.

(1.) CONFESSION OF SIN. There are things which you have done wrong. You have to acknowledge them to GOD, humbling yourself before Him, and looking up to Christ, as the Israelites looked up to the Brazen Serpent; believing that in that Crucified One there is full and free forgiveness. He Himself gives us, as our measure of pardon, one with the other, "until seventy times;" "*seven times in a day!*" (St. Matt. xviii. 21, 22; St. Luke xvii. 4.) Surely He Himself will not do less.

This acknowledgment of Sin involves *Self-examination.* The deceitfulness of the heart is beyond all our power to fathom. It is wonderful how easily we can persuade ourselves that it is "necessary" for us to "do as others do," and to leave undone what GOD tells us to do. It is sad to see, how, in a very few years after Confirmation,

those who have been confirmed can persuade themselves, that it is "impossible" to carry out Bible principles.

So there must be, "lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin," this daily Confession to GOD: looking at our Sins, acknowledging them to Him, and asking His forgiveness, with a full belief that He does really forgive us, for Christ's sake.

(2.) THANKSGIVING. Many are miserable, for want of realizing their blessings. We ask for something; and the answer comes, quietly, a day or two afterwards, and we quite forget that we had asked for it! (See Acts xii. 12–16.) Half the dark and morbid feelings which people have, making them a misery to themselves and to those with whom they live, arise from leaving out Thanksgiving. Find out texts about Thanksgiving. Learn them by heart. Do what they tell you to do. Often stop and thank GOD for all His mercies; for

common mercies, such as all of us have received; thank Him for "the means of grace," and for all the spiritual teaching which you have had; not to speak of those mercies given to each of us, which others do not know, or which we do not know ourselves, as yet. "In everything give thanks."

"Prayer" includes all this. The "Te Deum" is a prayer, no less than Psalm li.

(3.) PRAISE. For what He *is:* not merely for what He gives. For His Power, Love, Holiness, etc. Praise is what the old saints in *former* days have always loved so much. It is what we are *now* tanght to offer to GOD "day by day." Any who form their prayers on the model of the Church Prayers, which we should all try to do, will find how full they are of the spirit of Praise. And *hereafter*, when we shall have no need of Prayer, we shall *praise* GOD forever.

Praise Him, then; if it be only with a "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,

and to the Holy Ghost;" or the "Te Deum."

(4.) ASKING. In this, you cannot go too much into detail. You are coming to a "Father." But He is kinder and better than any earthly father. Or think of some old gray-haired saint, so holy, that at first you feel as if you could not tell *him* the wrong things you have done; and yet, if you did, you would find that he is just the one from whom you would receive the most sympathy.

All this is but an imperfect manifestation of the Love of GOD. No little thing that the Sunday-school child, or the youngest Communicant, has to ask from Him, is too trifling for Him to care about, though it may seem a trifle to others. For instance: help in overcoming some bad habit into which a young girl is apt to fall; or help in bearing her little trials patiently; or help in trying to make others happy, when she feels awkward and shy, and has noth-

ing to say. GOD can give her thoughts and words at such times, as much as at Prayer, or at Holy Communion.

The affairs of Church and State, all the things that seem to *us* so great and important, are not more great and important in GOD's sight, than the little child's petition for daily bread. GOD listens to every word you say, as much as He listens to your clergyman when he prays for his people at Holy Communion.

Speak as a child to a mother. Tell GOD what is on your heart, even when you are only able to say: "My GOD, this is a trouble to me, and I don't know what to do." Tell GOD *simply*. An earthly father does not like his child to hide himself, because unworthy to come near; he likes to have the child sitting on his knee, and telling him all his little troubles. And though we must not be so familiar with our heavenly Father, we must be as trustful.

Many a girl falls into an unhappy mar-

riage, through not having liked to ask GOD about such things!

(5.) INTERCESSION. This means, "going between." It is speaking to GOD *for others:* for our parents, our brothers and sisters, our servants, our friends; our fellow-candidates for Confirmation, our fellow-communicants afterwards; the Clergy; the whole Church of Christ.

Lastly, as the foundation of all private Prayer, take these simple thoughts:—

(1.) There is, in Heaven, GOD the FATHER. How that thought helps us, I have shown you already. A Father—in whom there is no impatience, no inclination to be irritable, always able, and always willing, to give His children what is good for them. A Father's heart, made perfect!

(2.) And there is in Heaven, GOD the SON. He is our Elder Brother: "like unto His brethren," truly, our BROTHER! The reason why Roman Catholics make so

much of the Virgin Mary, is that they have felt the need of a Friend in Heaven who is really *human*, and have, in many instances, not grasped the thought of what JESUS is. In HIM, we have all that they think they have in *her:* a *human* Heart of Love, if we may say it reverently, a *woman's* heart! He takes us by the hand, when we are quite tired out, sometimes, unable to realize anything, only able to say, "Through JESUS CHRIST!" He takes us by the hand, just as we are, and leads us to the Father, and covers all our negligences and ignorances with the robe of His own Righteousness.

(3.) And *in* us, to help us while we pray, there is GOD the HOLY GHOST. He "helpeth our infirmities." He puts thoughts and words into us, as we lie there before GOD, so helpless, and tired, and ashamed. We have been baptized in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST.

This thought will help us, then, as the beginning of all Prayer ; I am speaking *to* a Living Person ; *through* a Living Person ; *by* a Living Person, who dwells in me.

Remember, also, that if you wish to get real good from Prayer, you must try, *before you begin*, to realize to whom you are speaking ; what you are going to do ; what you have to ask, or to thank Him for. "Let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before GOD." (Eccl. v. 2 ; Job xxiii. 4 ; St. John iv. 23, 24.) If we go straight down on our knees, and *begin to pray at once*, without thought, we put ourselves into Satan's hands. Always pause for a moment, and *stand* before GOD, deliberately and reverently, *before you kneel down* in His holy Presence.

Pause, then, before you begin ; gather your thoughts together ; try to "shut the door" of your heart ; and say to yourself, *before* you kneel down in His Presence : GOD *is ;* GOD sees me, knows me, loves

me; GOD the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST. If you have only *three minutes* to spend in Prayer altogether, one minute will be well spent in first realizing that GOD "*is*, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

And pause again, if only for a minute, at the *end* of your Prayer. Stand once more, reverently, before GOD; call to mind what you have asked of Him; repeat some Promise, and say: "LORD, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief;" or, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me, for I know that Thou hearest Prayer in the Name of JESUS CHRIST." Or repeat the Creed, thoughtfully and thankfully; or simply say: "Glory be to the FATHER, and to the SON, and to the HOLY GHOST."

2. MEDITATION.

We have seen that the time set apart for GOD, each day, should be spent in Prayer, Meditation, and Bible-reading.

We have already considered the subject of PRAYER, with its five subdivisions: Confession of Sin, Thanksgiving, Praise, Petition (or Asking), and Intercession.

We now come to MEDITATION.

Meditation is not the same as ordinary Bible-reading, in which we read straight on, and take larger portions at a time.

It is still more different from *reading devotional books*.

What *is* "Meditation"?

It is AN EFFORT MADE, UNDER THE TEACHING OF THE HOLY GHOST, TO OBTAIN FOR OURSELVES, OR RATHER, TO RECEIVE FROM GOD, SOME LESSON OUT OF HIS WORD.

The first thing to remember is this: the HOLY GHOST wrote the Bible; *i. e.*, it was written under His guidance. (2 Pet. i. 21.) Therefore, He alone can explain it to us. Meditation is like asking our clergyman, or some other friend, to explain something which we do not understand, in a letter that he has written to us.

Let this, then, be our starting point: we are going to be led by the HOLY GHOST. We could remember texts, or work out subjects of thought, by ourselves. But in Meditation, we wish to put ourselves entirely under the teaching of GOD the HOLY GHOST. We are trying to act on the words of our Creed: "I believe in the HOLY GHOST, the LORD, and GIVER OF LIFE; *i. e.*, I believe that He is the LORD, and I believe that He is the Giver of all true life. (St. John xvi. 8–11; xiv. 19.)

Since Pentecost, the HOLY GHOST has been working among us, in a way and to an extent that He never did before. He works in different ways, for He is "the Lord:" but especially by means of the BIBLE. Read the following passages: Heb. iv. 12; 2 Cor. x. 4, 5; Eph. vi. 17; Rev. i. 16. They show us what the Bible is, when applied by the HOLY GHOST.

Sometimes He takes a text, and sends it like a piercing sword into the soul that has

never yet lived up to its real life, though brought to Christ, it may be, twenty years ago. He makes us so realize our sins that at our next Holy Communion we feel "the burden of them *intolerable*." At another time, He chooses a text, and uses it to cheer and comfort us; to show us how to bear some trials, or how to act under difficulties, or how to rise again after a fall. And sometimes, when we are utterly miserable, He puts fresh life into our hearts, by means of some old text that seems quite new to us under His teaching.

The HOLY GHOST is a LIVING PERSON, remember: and He can speak to our souls, through the Word, like an earthly friend at our side explaining some difficult book to us, and answering our questions. As the clergyman would explain his own letter, so the HOLY GHOST explains the Bible to us, only far more clearly. If you will watch for His individual teaching, — light and comfort, warning and conviction, reproof,

correction, instruction in righteousness, — day by day, you will find the truth of all this for yourselves.

But it is most important for you who are just beginning this duty that you should *be prepared for great difficulties.*

For a long time after you begin the habit of daily Meditation, — perhaps all your life, you will find continually that the time is gone, in *reverie!* Be prepared for this : do not be surprised if no good seems to come out of your Meditation. You will meet with temptations ; you will find your mind filled with wandering thoughts. They may be thoughts and plans about work for others — things so good in themselves that we cannot tell whether they come from GOD or from Satan, "transformed into an angel of light." Expect difficulties. "Forewarned, forearmed."

Set apart a certain time for this work every day. For beginners, a quarter of an hour is enough.

Choose the most quiet time. The morning is best; it is more difficult to fix our attention later in the day. Thank GOD if you *can* secure a quiet time, a quiet place. Think how hard it must be for the poor man in his one little room, with his wife and children, *trying* to think and pray! If you have no quiet place, go to the Church, if there is one near to you which is open all day.

Now for the work before us. We will divide it into five parts.

1. Before, or at the time, READ THE PASSAGE. Take the easier parts of the Bible at first; *e. g.*, a Parable or Miracle, or some short porion of the Second Lesson for the morning.

2. Kneel down, very reverently, and try to REALIZE THAT YOU ARE IN GOD'S PRESENCE. You can use the Collect at the beginning of the Communion Service, if not yet accustomed to pray in your own words. It is a good plan to take the Church Prayers,

and alter them according to our own need. Then try to picture our Lord to your mind in any way you find most easy, till all noisy thoughts are hushed and your heart is really "still." (Ps. iv. 4.) Think of Him, "wearied with His journey," talking to the poor sinner at Jacob's Well: or try to sit at Jesus' feet, with Mary of Bethany. Or picture Him, after His Resurrection, appearing to His disciples; or standing, where St. Stephen saw Him, at the Right Hand of GOD. Or think of Him as on the "Great White Throne," so as you *will* see Him one day, when no clergyman, no religious friend, can help you; feel yourself *alone* with Him, as you *will* be in that day — before Him, who has known all that you have done, and heard every word which you have spoken, all your life long. *Realize the Presence of God: on your knees*, unless you are ill, and not able to kneel.

3. SUBMIT YOUR WILL. Put yourself into His Hands. The secret of success,

in Meditation, is to be content to have no comfort, and even no teaching, consciously, unless He wills. Say to Him: "O my GOD, it *may* be that during this time I shall not receive even *one* thought! I submit myself, as JESUS did, when He was nailed to that Cross. Give me anything Thou wilt; or *nothing!* Even so, Father! I cannot get any real teaching out of this Meditation, unless Thou givest it. Give it, or withhold it, as seemeth best to Thee. What Thou givest me, I will gather: what Thou withholdest, I will not desire. Not my will, but Thine, be done. Amen." If you are *determined*, like so many, that you *will get something*, you will often get nothing, and then grow discouraged. We must not snatch our daily bread from our Father's table, but quietly wait, and say: "*Give* us this day our daily bread." "The eyes of all wait upon Thee, O LORD, and Thou givest them their meat —in due season." (Ps. cxlv.) Do not be

disheartened if you get no comfort at the time, but say: "What could a poor sinner like me expect?" And then, go on calmly. Be like a child in an unknown country, holding the hand of a guide whom it trusts.

4. PICTURE THE SCENE. For instance — take the story of the blind man near Jericho. Imagine him sitting by the wayside, under the waving palm-trees; his hands on his staff. He hears the tramp of a great multitude, nearer and nearer, and wonders what it all means. They tell him. He cries out for help. Hear that cry! How earnest it is! It reaches the ear of JESUS Himself. In vain do the people tell him to be quiet — he only cries the louder. See! Jesus is standing still. He is speaking to some one — sending some one to fetch him! Look at the poor blind man, rising up, almost thrown down by that long Eastern garment; then casting it aside, and led by the man who has come to fetch him. And now, he stands face to face with

JESUS. Listen! What question is JESUS asking? And what does he answer? Another moment, and his prayer is heard!—those blind eyes are opened, and he sees everything clearly—sees JESUS Himself, and wishes never to lose sight of Him again! The crowd moves on—he moves with them: he needs no guide now; he follows JESUS in the way.

This is called, in books, "bringing the *Imagination* to bear on the subject." Probably, no two of you will do it in the same way. If you find your Imagination running away with you, pause for a moment, and quietly pray: "O HOLY GHOST, help me!" Remember, the HOLY GHOST *saw* the scene, and He only can help *you* to see it.

Use the *Understanding*, as well as the Imagination. *Think* about what you have read. Ask GOD to help you to understand it. Meditation is really hard work.

5. SEEK ONE LESSON. Only one! If you find many thoughts springing up at

once, pause, lift up your heart, and wait till the HOLY GHOST shows you *the* thought He wishes you to take. Be like a little child; come back again and again to your Guide, and grasp His hand the more firmly, when you have been wandering.

Sometimes, you will find it difficult to discover this one Lesson; sometimes, quite easy; just as GOD sees best. Sometimes, it will be a Lesson of Warning. GOD will show you that you have been nursing a *viper!* — some secret sin — never seen in its true light, till now, in the Presence of Christ, you feel how He would have slain it with one withering glance! Sometimes, it will be a Lesson of Comfort, out of the very Heart of Christ. Very often, other passages of the Bible will come into your mind, as illustrations. (You need not stop to look them out.) Or your "one Lesson" will be given you in some old text — or verse of a hymn — learnt long ago, but now learnt afresh from GOD Himself, brought to

your mind by the HOLY SPIRIT. He influences the *Memory* as well as the Imagination, if yielded up to Him. (St. John xiv. 26.)

6. Having got your Lesson, *speak to God* for the rest of the time. Ask the HOLY SPIRIT to guide your *Affections* and your *Will*, and to give you words in which to tell GOD what you feel. Say to GOD, *e. g.*, "O my GOD, I have been so unhappy for some days, and now Thou hast comforted me. I have felt like Bartimæus, left behind in the dusty high-road of life, and Thou hast called me to Thee, and shown me Thy marvelous Loving Kindness. O how patient and gentle Thou hast been with me!" So shall we be led to praise Him, before the holy angels.

Or perhaps the HOLY SPIRIT may fix our thoughts on the words: "Casting aside his garment," and teach us to confess how often we have allowed earthly things to hinder our prayers, and then lead us to ask GOD

for help to "lay aside every weight," and obey the call of JESUS.

Or He may lead us to see how impatient and selfish we have often been; how unlike JESUS, who could find time to care for this poor sufferer, when the CROSS was so near. And then we shall be led to send up a prayer to this same JESUS, saying: "O LORD, how long I have sinned in this way, and never seen how wicked it was! How different from THEE! Forgive me, and help me to be patient, and gentle, and unselfish, like Thyself!"

Or perhaps the HOLY SPIRIT may teach us what poor, blind, self-satisfied creatures we are — how little we realize our own sinfulness. And then we shall cry out, like Bartimæus: "LORD, that I may receive my sight!" "From all blindness of *heart*, GOOD LORD, deliver me!"

And if you have *nothing* to say — if you can find no words, — then kneel before Him silently, or simply pray: "LORD, have mercy upon me! LORD, help me!"

It is not the amount of time that you give to it, nor any beautiful sentences in your prayers, nor the earnestness thrown into any particular prayer, that makes your Meditation acceptable in His sight. You are coming to a Friend more ready to hear than you are to pray; wont to give more than you *desire* or deserve; too true a Friend, to let the wicked Self in you remain unpurified.

Make a note of the Lesson learnt each day. And if, at the end of a month, you find that they have *all* been lessons of comfort, or *all* of warning, it is time to pause and ask GOD to show you the truth. There is something wrong. You are letting your own temperament interfere with GOD'S teaching.

TAKE THESE THOUGHTS AWAY WITH YOU:

Watch against Reverie — mere dreaming, instead of thinking, and praying, and listening to GOD, — idle listlessness, as if out of

doors on a hot summer day, by the side of a running stream, thinking of nothing at all! Do not confuse two things: Submission of Will, and spiritual Sloth. You must "*labor* for that meat which . . . . the SON of MAN shall *give* unto you." (St. John vi. 27.) Meditation must be hard work. This is why I advised you not to put it off till night.

But, if night is the only time you have, GOD will accept it. (2 Cor. viii. 12.) GOD never gives us hard dry Rules, in the Bible. He only asks our *best*, whatever that may be. I have known working men, with *no* leisure time, whose souls wonderfully prospered. Of course it would have been very different if they had had all the day to enjoy themselves.

From time to time during your Meditation, lift up your heart to the HOLY GHOST for help. Send up a prayer, like an arrow, and *expect* His help in answer to your prayer.

You will find, as you go on, wonderful teaching in the hymn: "Come, HOLY GHOST, our souls inspire." Each year that you use it, the words will gain a deeper meaning. "Keep far our *foes; i. e.*, Satan, and the world, — even thoughts of our own family, if coming between us and GOD at the hour of prayer. "Give Peace at home" "the Peace of GOD, which passeth understanding," that we may not be too miserable and dissatisfied, and lose heart.

If, when trying to "realize the Presence of GOD on your knees," you find — what every Christian finds at times — that all is dark and vague, so that you realize GOD'S Presence even less than in ordinary life, — the reason is so obvious, that all of us could tell it to each other! It is, that Satan, hating us, and hating GOD, is trying to tear away from the FATHER'S arms the child that is seeking to draw near to Him. If you cannot overcome him, if all efforts fail, lift your heart to GOD, quietly and

trustfully, saying: "O my GOD, Thou seest how little I realize Thy Presence! Be merciful to me, a sinner! Deal not with me according to my sins, but bless me, cold and dead as I am." And then go on, calmly, to your next point in the Meditation.

And if, at the end, all has been cold and confused, OFFER IT TO GOD. He has seen you on your knees. He has been watching you, lovingly. He can give to you *afterwards*, what you have not been able to grasp at the time. He will show you, presently, whether or not it was SIN that caused the failure. While at your work, later in the day, the thought may come to you suddenly: "I did something that was *wrong!*" The LORD, in His great Love, has brought your sin to your remembrance, that you may acknowledge it, and pray Him to wash it all away. Sometimes, however, the cause of seeming failure has *not* been Sin: the failure has been a blessing in disguise,

to train your Will, to humble you, and to help you to "walk by faith and not by sight."

Do not be discouraged. GOD knows all your difficulties. He will be "a very present Help."

Only, try to have a clear System and Plan. Live up to any Plan which you have already made: keep to it, year after year, or alter it as you find needful. Go from strength to strength, improving from year to year, and you shall advance, please GOD, beyond those who have taught you.

3. BIBLE-READING.

The third great Division of the Devotional Life is BIBLE-READING.

Whatever else may have to be left out, nothing must be allowed to shorten the time allotted to the BIBLE itself.

I have already given you some hints for "Meditation," which is *one* way of using this Holy Book.

But it is not the *only* way. Let me now give you some suggestions for "BIBLE-READING" itself.

Begin by placing yourself in the Presence of GOD, the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST. Say to Him, thoughtfully and reverently: "THOU, GOD, seest me." Or, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth!" "That which I see not, teach Thou me!" "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of Thy Law." (Gen. xvi. 13; 1 Sam. iii. 9; Job xxxiv. 32; Ps. cxix. 18.) Or you might use the Collect for the 2d Sunday in Advent, or for St. Mark's Day, or for the 19th Sunday after Trinity; or any simple words of your own, confessing your need of GOD'S help and teaching, and asking Him to give you that help and teaching.

Then read a portion of Scripture: a larger portion than you would choose for your "Meditation." For instance, the 2d Morning Lesson for the day.

After a year at this, take the 2d *Evening* Lesson: or, if you have time, the *two* New Testament Lessons for the day.

It is a great privilege to hear all the Lessons in the Daily Service. Few, however, are able to enjoy this blessing regularly. At all events — whether you go to Daily Service or not, read a portion of Holy Scripture by yourself.

Arrange all this according to your opportunities. Only, do not leave GOD'S Word and your own soul — if I may say it reverently — to *take their chance*, as so many Christians do. Have a Plan: and let your plan include *less* than you can generally carry out. Do not start at once, after Confirmation, in such a way as you cannot continue: *e.g.*, with too many chapters of the Bible to read every day. Better not make vows, than break them. (Eccl. v. 5.)

Take this thought with you into your Bible-reading, whether in Church, or

alone: GOD IS SPEAKING TO ME. As, in Prayer, I speak to GOD, so, in His Word, GOD speaks to ME. Keep this thought steadily in mind: GOD is speaking; He is speaking to ME: and you will be surprised to find how GOD Himself will teach you, in that day's Lesson.

Perhaps the teaching may come in the midst of a string of names! In 1 Kings xvi. 33, for instance, it is said of Ahab: "Ahab did *more* to provoke the LORD GOD of Israel to anger, than all . . . . that were before him." It may set you thinking: What *was* it in Ahab, which provoked GOD so much?

Again, in Acts xx. 13, in a parenthesis, we find the words: "Minding himself to go on foot." You will find a whole lesson drawn from these words, in his "Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture," by Dean Goulburn. He brings it out quite simply; suggesting how St. Paul felt his need of being *alone*, and probably planned

this solitary walk on purpose to secure an opportunity for quiet prayer and meditation.

There are hundreds of other instances. And some day, when you are listening — alone, or in church — to hear what GOD has to say to you in the Lesson for the day, some new thought will come to you, that will be like a turning-point in your whole life!

Perhaps you have never yet read your Bible with any *intelligence*, such as you would give to any other book that you were studying. You have never yet really *studied* the Bible, though it is GOD'S own Book! But do not be disheartened. Try to remember what I now suggest to you, and you will find it possible to carry it out, some day.

There are many ways of studying the Bible.

(1.) *Study a portion, and by degrees ex-*

tend it. Take our LORD's Life on earth, to begin with: then, the early Christian Church: then, the Jewish Church, out of which it sprang. Trace the plan and purpose of GOD, from the beginning.

(2.) *Begin with a general view, and fill in portions.* Seek help, in gaining this general view to start with, from your clergyman, or from some book, if you need help. Read, first, of the call of Abraham, then his training, his private life — family life — and (in his descendants) national life. Then, the Wilderness life: how the children of Israel were brought to a living sense of the Living GOD as their Ruler, how they were planted in Canaan — intended and trained to be missionaries to the Gentiles, but rejected their vocation. Then, the *Christian Church* became missionaries. GOD took the few believing Jews, formed a Church by Holy Baptism, and then, in an ever-widening circle, the great work of that Church was carried on, to our own age. (Acts i. 8.)

Then learn, as you go on with this Bible-study, how you yourselves are part of this great Church, to be used, if you *will*, as Witnesses for Christ everywhere, by your lives and words.

Such the sketch : *filling up* will be a work for many years, as you study more closely GOD's dealings with the Patriarchs, with Israel in Egypt, in the Wilderness, etc., and the life of our Blessed LORD, of His Apostles, etc.

If you have time, get some good book to help you in the different parts of this study : *e. g.*, Conybeare and Howson's "Life of St. Paul," when reading the Acts.

All this is work enough for threescore years and ten ! But is it not worth while ? And is it not our bounden *duty ?*

(3.) Cultivate the habit of *learning Scripture by heart.* Thank GOD, if you have been trained to it from childhood. If not, begin to *train yourself*, now. Do not think it is

too late. Make some regular plan. *At least*, learn one verse of Holy Scripture every day. Use your memory for GOD; and ask Him to strengthen it in the using. (St. Luke xix. 15, 16.) It is *dishonoring to God*, if we store the memory with *man's* words, however true and beautiful, and neglect to fill it with the word of GOD. For the glory of GOD, then, as well as for the good of our own souls, keeping *out* vain thoughts, and bringing *in* holy thoughts, and also for the sake of helping and teaching others, store the mind and memory with holy Scripture. (2 Tim. iii. 15; Ps. cxix. 11.)

(4.) Again: study your Bible with the *Marginal References*. Follow a *word* through the whole Bible, with the help of your Concordance, if you like.

Observe the various senses in which the same word is used. For instance: "*Children of God.*" (1.) All created beings. (2.) All that are linked to Him by Holy Baptism. (3.) All that have responded to that Love in

a deeper sense. (4.) Those who have exchanged thralldom for perfect trust. (5.) "The children of the Resurrection."

All this you will never learn so well from Sermons and Classes, as from Marginal References, worked out for yourselves.

(5.) Another way of studying Holy Scripture is to *look at Contexts*. How often we hear texts quoted, *mis*-quoted, without reference to their context. You would never dream of dealing thus with any *human* book, prose or poetry. Imagine Tennyson's "Two Voices," read in *fragments* like this! It is only the BIBLE that people treat in this careless way. Few things are more dishonoring to the HOLY SPIRIT, than not taking the trouble to understand texts, by searching into the context.

For instance: Is. xxx. 7. "*Their strength is to sit still.*" Study the context, and you will see it has nothing to do with the theories which it is often quoted to support. The *real* argument conveys just the *opposite* meaning!

Again, in St. John iii. 7: "*Ye must be born again.*" This was not spoken, at first, with reference to Conversion. There are numbers of texts which *do* teach Conversion, as plainly as possible; but our LORD'S words to Nicodemus do not refer to this, at all events, not *directly*.

So, again, in Ecclesiastes: how often we hear sentences quoted by themselves, which thus convey quite a wrong idea. This book *really* describes the struggles of the king, trying in different ways to find happiness in the *world*, and by degrees coming to a better mind.

One more instance: Numbers xxxii. 23. "*Be sure your sin will find you out.*" The text is often quoted, but the context is seldom considered. The story from which it is taken conveys a wonderful lesson to Christians that are content to enjoy their own spiritual privileges, and leave their brethren to take care of themselves. The "Sin" here condemned is that *spiritual selfishness* which can sleep while souls are perishing!

(All this will take you *weeks* or *years* to work out. Do not be discouraged if you are led to realize your own ignorance more than you have ever done before; or if through circumstances, want of leisure, etc., you are unable to follow out these suggestions.)

(6.) By degrees, it will be very interesting to gather together, by the help of the Holy Spirit, *Principles* for the Christian life, from Old Testament *Rules*. St. Paul gathers the Principle, that GOD'S Workers are not to be starved, from the Old Testament Rule: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn." (Deut. xxv. 4; 1 Cor. ix. 9–11.) There are many little Rules like this, in the Old Testament, which let in an amount of light on the Eternal Mind and Will of GOD, worth a thousand Lectures, however interesting at the time.

(7.) Or try to learn from your Bible the *different sides* of His Eternal Truth. GOD gives us both sides: neither can be ig-

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nored. Yet it is almost impossible fully to realize and unite *both*. For instance:—

(1.) *Election and Free Will.* Everything is of GOD. This comes out clearly, in the Bible. Yet, Freedom of Will is equally clear. Accept *both* truths. Get what teaching you can, from both. Leave it to GOD to reconcile them.

(2.) *The Means of Grace.* Some Christians seem to see no special good in Baptism, or in Holy Communion. Bible-reading, and private Prayer, or Prayer with Christian friends, is all that they care for. To others, again, the Sacraments appear the *only* channels of blessing. Yet GOD has revealed *both* sides of Truth.

(3.) *Baptism and Conversion.* The truth of our privileges by Baptism is as clear as possible, in the Bible. Yet the need of *Conversion* is equally clear. We may think that we see a way in which to reconcile the two truths. At all events, both are in the Bible, and GOD can harmonize them.

(4.) So, also, as to the *use and abuse of the individual help of a clergyman.* Some say, "I need none but GOD," etc. Others seem to be able to do nothing without their clergyman! They are always running to him in every little matter. Both of these views are *exaggerations* of *truth.* In the Bible we find a distinct recognition of the ordinance of the Ministry, as the channel through which the blessing is usually given. Yet, still more clearly, we see that Christians can draw near to our LORD Himself, as near as Mary at Bethany, without *any earthly* help. *Both* are truths. The practical problem is, how to use without abusing, how to take what GOD gives us through His Minister, yet not so as to forget the Saviour Himself. Moses and Elias gone, and JESUS "found alone!" When you are in difficulties, wanting to know if you are right with GOD, or with man, if you are dividing your time rightly, etc.; or if you are perplexed and troubled in prayer, etc., go to

GOD'S Minister. But if you find that you are always going to him, be sure you are *losing that living trust in the Living* LORD *which is the secret of all progress.*

(5.) So, again, with *Evangelical* Truth, and *Church* Truth. When trying to balance the two, you are sure to be perplexed sometimes, even if you have been well advised, as to how far this or that is GOD'S Will. As you go on in life, you will find some who will tell you there is no peace to be found, except in the Church of Rome! or, that all you have heard here or elsewhere is "Priestcraft!" Satan will try to make you unhappy, and the truths of which we have been speaking will perplex you.

But try to grasp this thought. HE in whom we believe, and by whom we are judged, is not an abstraction of ideas, but a LIVING LORD.

You may, and probably will, make many mistakes.

Still, trust in that LIVING LORD. Put

yourself, as honestly as you can, into His Presence. Study your Bible. *Try* to find out His Will, saying: "Lighten our darkness, O LORD:" and He will give you in His own way and time, out of His own Word, the teaching which you need.

"SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES." Whatever else is unread, let not the BIBLE be left unopened.

"Then shall we know, if we *follow on* to know the LORD." HE has said: "I am He which liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore." (Hosea vi. 3; Rev. i. 18.)

4. SELF-EXAMINATION.

In this, as well as in other parts of the devotional life, nothing is worse than being enslaved by cut and dried Rules. A guide is welcome to the blind, but thank GOD when you are able to walk by yourselves. By degrees, if you are living to GOD, however imperfectly, He will show you how to

carry out the general principles of the Bible in the details of your life, devotional and secular. But, meanwhile, take these general hints : —

At some time in the year, *review your spiritual state.* You will find "Questions for Self-examination," to help you, in many books now published. Or examine yourself as to *special* sins, Pride, Temper, etc. ; or test your life by the Ten Commandments. At least *once a year*, during Lent, let there be this *general* Self-examination.

For *ordinary* Self-examination, daily, or before your weekly or fortnightly Communion, *make your own questions*, from books, according to the time at your disposal. Take out of any book which you are using, or out of these Lectures, those points which you find touch your *own* heart and life the most sensitively. Add to them by degrees, as you learn to know yourself better.

Some points for daily Self-examination

will be obvious, *e. g.:* Did you get up, at once, in the morning? If not, *why* not? Did you give up the day to GOD, on first rising? Did you give the right time to Prayer? if not, what was the reason? such as could be given to the all-loving SAVIOUR? That Temper, which some of you are struggling to conquer, has it been kept down? That Pride of yours, has it been checked, when some new fault has been found in you? Have you been flippant — allowed your spirits to run away with you? Have you been too reserved — thinking of yourself too much? Have you said your grace reverently? Have you tried to make others happy? Have you been kind to children? etc.

Some find it helpful to *divide* the day's Self-examination, and note down these things at *each* time of Prayer. Use your own judgment in this.

Others, who are weary at night, have found it useful to give the time after tea, or

before dressing for dinner, to Self-examination and Prayer; and before going to rest, merely to read a few verses of Scripture, and commend themselves and others to GOD. For many people torture themselves at night because they "cannot get near GOD," when they are simply *over-tired.* They would be no better able to translate a difficult book!

Others, again, find it a good plan, when pressed for time, to *substitute* Self-examination for their usual Meditation, once a week, so as to go over the sins which they have noted down during the week, and ask themselves a few more questions than at their daily Self-examination.

Your clergyman may help you in all these details, if you are perplexed. But remember, you *must* fight it out for yourself. Give *ten minutes,* — more or less, of course, according to your opportunities, *every day,* to this work of Self-examination. Put yourself in GOD'S Presence; ask for

the help of His Holy Spirit, to show you your sins and to make you sorry; and then, look back on the hours past.

Confess your sins to GOD, simply and honestly, when you have found them out; ask Forgiveness, for JESUS CHRIST'S sake, and believe that you receive that Forgiveness at once.

Before you make your own Heads of Self-examination, think: *If you were advising some one else?* What temptations would be most likely to meet such a one in your circumstances?

For instance: every one knows that "religious" people — workers for GOD — are tempted to think much of themselves, and to pass harsh judgments on others; to consider themselves higher than others, when they are not *really* higher. If, therefore, your lot is among this number, by GOD'S goodness, take it for granted that *your* temptation will be to judge harshly of

others, and to think too little of home duties. We often find people anxious to lead a "separate religious life," who would think it a great trouble to look after a child, or to sit patiently with a sick, fretful mother, in her last years. The world is wrong, when it calls religious people "hypocrites." But GOD allows them to be tempted, and Satan suits his temptations to each soul.

Again: if *popular*, what special temptations are likely? You will be inclined to think that everything must give way to you; to run away from difficulties, etc.

If *despised*, fallen in position? To become over-sensitive, always on the look-out for insults, etc.

Self, and the love of the world, are *most* developed in *these two classes:* those who have all the world *with* them, and those who have all the world *against* them.

Again, what if living *alone?* To become absorbed in self — morbid — complaining, etc.

Or what, if obliged by your relations to go out much into the *world?* You will be tempted to fritter away time, to become content with a low standard of truth and duty — to hold your tongue, instead of speaking boldly for Christ, etc.

Once more: What temptation is most likely, in a life of *comfort?* Self-indulgence. The mere fact of having a comfortable bed develops a whole class of temptations unknown to the poor.

A sensible person, wishing to serve his LORD, will ask, in all these cases, as if asking of *another* person: What are *his* temptations likely to be, in such circumstances?

These are only *illustrations.* As you advance, you will make your own questions.

You will never *get on*, without this general Self-examination, from time to time. "Examine yourselves. Prove your own selves." So the HOLY GHOST says. (2 Cor. xiii. 5.) Represent to yourselves the

Judgment to come — that great White Throne!

This brings me back to the general *Principles* which underlie all this work of Self-examination.

It is so difficult, rightly to divide the Word of Truth! Satan suits his temptations to different souls, and to different circumstances of the same soul; as he tempted our LORD Himself, first to doubt, and then to presume. Even in this little Class, there are different classes of *souls;* and the Minister of GOD is almost sure, while helping one, to disturb another, unless each Member of the Class goes to the Bible and Prayer, alone with GOD, afterwards, that He may apply the teaching given to its individual need.

There are two distinct sides of temptation: you need two distinct Principles to guard you from the snare on either side.

More than half of our congregations are losing their own souls through *want* of earnestness.

But, on the other hand, a great many Christians are losing opportunities of advancement and of usefulness, and are robbed of all present peace and comfort, through a fussy, fidgetty, *hurrying on;* so *determined* to get all *right* in a week, or month, or year, or in five years! "O tarry thou the LORD'S leisure!" (Ps. xxvii. 24.)

Therefore I say:—

1. *Look into yourselves.* "Search and examine your own consciences, and that, not lightly, and after the manner of dissemblers with GOD," — "by the rule of GOD'S Commandments," — your Duty to GOD and your neighbor."

2. *Do this calmly,* as in the sight of GOD. You are GOD Almighty's children. He Himself has broken down the barrier. He "*hath* reconciled us to Himself by JESUS CHRIST." (2 Cor. v. 18–21.) When

He washed away your sin, He said, as plainly as He could say, "You must *trust* Me."

Trust Him, then, at *all* times. If deeper trials yet await you, in the work of your sanctification, *trust* Him still. We *must* have dark hours. What should we do in the hour of Death, — when we may be only able to say AMEN to the prayer offered by another, if we have not been taught to cling to Christ in darkness, during days of health?

We *must* be taught and trained, through *darkness*.

Be calm, therefore. Believe that GOD loves you. He desires, far more than you do, that Christ should be formed in you, His holy Image reflected in you.

And the power of the HOLY GHOST, who has begun the good work in you, is far greater than the inward hindrances, and the outward circumstances of trial and difficulty, by which you are disheartened.

5. INTERCESSION.

The work of Intercession might extend infinitely. Whole hours might be spent upon it. Perhaps that is why our LORD, whose Heart was so full of Love, spent whole nights in prayer, as one soul after another rose up before Him.

Many people ask our prayers; and many, who do *not* ask them, need them still more. Public things also need our prayers. The list increases as we grow older, and the mind enlarges in spiritual things. Intercessory Prayer is a real *work;* none the less real, because silent and unseen.

> "Prayer moves the Arm which moves the world,
> And brings Salvation down."

What good you might do to others, if you made it a daily rule to offer one definite intercession for all who had on that day asked your prayers, and for all with whom you had been especially brought in contact during the day! But what if you

were simply to *name* them before GOD, at night, and ask Him to bless them? With what a new meaning would you then say the "OUR FATHER!"

Study St. Paul's teaching in 1 Tim. ii. 1–6, and you will see the importance and the reality of this work of Intercession, and the spirit in which it should be done.

Do not forget the "*giving of thanks*," which he teaches us here by precept, and elsewhere, by example. (2 Thess. i. 3–11, etc., etc.)

"In everything, by prayer and supplication, *with thanksgiving*, let your requests" for others as well as for yourselves, "be *made known unto God*." (Phil. iv. 6.)

And then "the Peace of GOD . . . . shall keep your hearts and minds" — as regards others and not yourselves only — "through CHRIST JESUS." He is the "ONE MEDIATOR;" His Intercessions alone give force to ours; we do but join the stream of those ceaseless Intercessions when we try to pray one for the other.

Show that you believe in the power of our LORD'S Intercessions, by pleading in HIS NAME for others, at times when you feel utterly cold and lifeless.

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving," even when your prayers for others seem unheard. Do not be surprised if, after asking a special blessing for any soul, something comes which seems to blast all your hopes. When you have grown older in prayer, you will often — I do not say *always* — find that such things were *the beginning of the answer!* GOD is trying your faith: He waits, perhaps, to see if you will go on praying. (St. Luke xviii. 1–8; St. Matt. xv. 21–28.)

Believe, then, in the *reality* of Intercessory Prayer. Be *humble*, remembering that by no power or holiness of your own you can gain blessing for others. Be *definite*, that the precious time given to this work may not be wasted. Be *thankful* for all that GOD has done, for others as well as yourself, already.

And be *persevering*. "In due season we *shall* reap, *if we faint not*." (Gal. vi. 9, 10.)

VI. — How to make a Private Plan of Devotion.

Before concluding this "Guide," let me give you some suggestions as to making a private plan of DEVOTION for yourselves, with a view to spiritual progress.

1. SUBJECTS FOR PRAYER.

It is the Will of GOD that we should "*ask*" Him for everything which we want. (Phil. iv. 6.) But we so little realize our dependence upon Him, we are so much *less* ready to pray, than He is to hear our prayers, that we quite forget to "ask" for many things which we need, day by day, unless we have something to remind us!

You may divide the *Subjects for Prayer* thus: Temporal and Eternal: or, more definitely, Things needed for the Body, Soul,

and Spirit, which are the three parts of our human nature. (1 Thess. v. 23.)

(I.) Things needed for the BODY.

This will include *all temporal blessings:* all "things that pertain to this life" (1 Cor. vi. 3); all those things which "the nations of the world seek after" in a *wrong* way, *i. e.*, in a self-willed, greedy, covetous, ungodly spirit, putting them *first* in their thoughts; but which the children of GOD may "seek after" also, in a *right* way, *i. e.*, humbly and trustfully and prayerfully, remembering that His SON has said: "Your heavenly FATHER knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of GOD and His Righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (St. Matt. vi. 32, 33.)

These "Temporal Things" will therefore include, —

(*a.*) *Health and Strength.*

(*b.*) Help to "keep *under* the body, and bring it into subjection;" not wasting

strength, so as to unfit you for work; nor, on the other hand, yielding to that Self-indulgence which is the curse of the present day.

(*c.*) *Friends:* that GOD will give you pleasant and useful friends; such as will really help you and make you happy.

(*d.*) *Plans:* including all your *little* plans for pleasure as well as work; visits to friends, etc. Nothing is too trifling to "our FATHER."

(*e.*) *Money:* that you may use it rightly; and that you may have sufficient. "Your FATHER knoweth what things ye have need of." He knows how much each of His children needs, individually. He does not give out His supplies like a parish allowance! "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." (St. Luke xii. 30–37.) Tell Him what you want, simply and quietly; in fewer words than it takes me to tell you about it, adding, always: "Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine, be done!"

(II.) The SOUL.

This will include *Thoughts and Feelings:* all the help you want, to guide your thoughts and feelings rightly.

(*a.*) *Thoughts.* How often we see the mind frittered away, a good education wasted, opportunities of usefulness narrowed, for lack of the power of *concentration*, of gathering up what you have read, and making real use of it! Ask GOD for "wisdom." Ask Him to give you "a right judgment in all things." "He giveth liberally, and upbraideth not." (James i. 5.) He will not upbraid us with all our past negligences, if only we come to Him now, and ask Him to help us in consecrating to Him the powers of mind which He has lent us to use for His glory.

(*b.*) *Feelings.* Ask GOD to guide your feelings: to help you to control them, and to use them practically.

Ask Him to give you Love, Forbearance, etc., in the *little* trials of life. Ask Him to

increase your powers of sympathy: to give you more quickness and depth of sympathy, in little things as well as great. Opportunities of doing a kindness are often lost from mere want of thought.

> "Evil is wrought from want of thought
> As well as want of heart."

Half a dozen lines of kindness may bring sunshine into the whole day of some sick person. Think of the pleasure you might give to some one who is much shut up, and who has fewer pleasures than you have, by sharing with her some little comfort or enjoyment that *you* have learnt to look upon as a necessary of life, — the pleasant drive, the new book, flowers from the country, etc.; even taking her to a new room, showing her your pictures, etc. Try to put yourself in another's place. Ask, "What should I like myself, if I were hard-worked, or sick, or lonely?" Cultivate the *habit* of sympathy.

(III.) The SPIRIT. Think of the *spirit-*

ual things which you need. Most of all, the help of the HOLY GHOST: that He may change your whole nature, and form the likeness of Christ in you, little by little; that He may give you Humility, help you to keep Self in its right place; and give you a brave, firm, true, outspoken Courage, instead of that "fear of man" which has tied and bound you so often!

Ask Him to help you in fighting against your own *Besetting Sin*, etc.

Do not be disheartened, and say: "How shall I ever go through a whole string like this?" No one wants you to "go through a whole string like this." I am only showing you how to make a *division*. I want to help you to carry the burden you have; not to lay a fresh burden on you. Divide your subjects for prayer, and take a few, or many, each day, according to the time you have.

Other divisions might be suggested.

For instance, your CONFIRMATION VOWS

— to renounce, believe, obey : or the three enemies that you promised to renounce — the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.

(1.) The *World.* There are hundreds of ways in which it tempts us. If each of us were to tell out before others, how *our* "World" affects *us!* Those who do not go much into "the world," as it is called, often think themselves free from worldliness, when they have just as much got *their* "World!" Yet we belong to our LORD, and we are pledged to "fight manfully." All of us *wish* not to care for the silly fancies of the world, or its praise or blame.

(2.) The *Flesh. Dawdling*, at night, as well as in the morning : that idle way of doing things, which is neither rest nor work. All habits of sloth ; putting off our duties ; doing what we *like*, instead of what we *ought ;* doing things at the wrong time ; self-indulgence in little things ; forgetting what we are taught about the body in

1 Cor. ix. 27; vi. 20; Rom. vi. 12, 13; xii. 1.

(3.) The *Devil.* He seeks to lay burdens on us: hard thoughts of GOD; doubts; *distrustful worry about having failed, made mistakes,* etc.; all that robs us of a child-like confidence in GOD: all this is the Devil's work. The ideal, child-like state is, to go back to our FATHER at once, when we have grieved Him, and say: "FATHER, I have sinned; I am heartily sorry; forgive me, for JESUS CHRIST'S sake:" but not for a moment to let the thought remain, "I am not forgiven."

> "What! Fallen again? Yet cheerful rise;
> Thine Intercessor never dies."

Do not be so conceited as to be surprised, when you have fallen. Say to yourself: It only shows me *what I am,* and how great is Thy Love. I come back to Thee, "just as I am," and I believe in that Love.

All that robs us of this child-like confidence, remember, is of the Devil. That

worrying, fretting, anxious thought, which is so different from solemn Penitence!

Or again: "*The Mind of* CHRIST." How suggestive of subjects for Prayer! Think of His Humility, His Patience when interrupted, and yet His readiness to be thus interrupted; not putting Self forward, and yet, so ready to *be put forward*, if needed! How different from the Self-consciousness which is often counted as Humility!

Think, again, of His Large-heartedness. So different from that narrowness which sees *no* truth in "High Church views," or in "Low Church"—all those little "*isms*" which are only *part* of GOD'S eternal Truth! Pray GOD to help you to receive and put forth the *whole* of that Truth. It is too large, too infinite, to be cramped by any merely human system.

All this may be *five years'* work, practically. But you may be scattered far and wide, before long: and I wish, that if you go far away, and perhaps do not find in

your new home the opportunity of much teaching, you may have learnt the *habit* of going to the Best Teacher. "When they were alone, He expounded all things to His disciples." (St. Mark iv. 34.)

2. HEADS FOR INTERCESSION.

Here, as elsewhere, there is need of *system*. Here, as elsewhere, make a plan for yourself.

Write a list of things and persons for whom you ought to pray.

Mark, in your book, some for *every* day: *e. g.*, Parents, Brothers and Sisters; your Parish, your Clergyman, the Holy Church of Christ throughout the world; those with whom you are specially thrown, those who have asked your prayers, those who have been kind to you; any whom you may have injured, or any who may have been led into sin by your influence and example; and any who may have injured *you*, in thought, word, or deed, *on that day*.

And some, for *certain* days only, *e. g.*, the Sick and Suffering, souls that are seeking the Saviour, souls that have believed, and need to be built up in their faith ; the Careless, Hardened, or Wavering ; Church-workers in your own Parish, *i. e.*, District Visitors, Teachers, etc. ; your Country, Foreign Missions, etc. Thus each will fall into its own place, and all will become easy, as year by year you enlarge your list.

3. THOUGHTS FOR DARK HOURS.

There are truths which you see clearly now, and could clearly point out to others, but may lose sight of again. Store them up for the time of need. Mark any texts or quotations from sermons, etc., or what you hear or read of the experience of others in sorrow, to be studied, when inclined to think your own trials worse than those of others. Learn, *before* the dark and cloudy day, what good may come out of such trials for your own soul, for the Church, for souls

around. God may be training you to help and comfort others with the comfort wherewith you yourself are "comforted of GOD." (2 Cor. i. 3, 4.)

VII. — Thoughts in Conclusion.

(A.) *Never be content, so long as any Book of Prayer, even the Prayer Book itself, is your only way of speaking to* GOD. Never rest till the *habit* is formed, of speaking to GOD in your own words. Books of Prayer, however useful at times, must not be *substitutes* for what GOD loves to see, — a little child kneeling at His feet, and telling its Father what it needs.

(B.) *Never let the spirit which* GOD *has called to freedom, be in bondage to a system.* Use the system which I have suggested, or any other, as a way to discipline your own mind, to prevent its running to seed — to avoid wasting time. But Christ has called you to Freedom! Out of the System, rise to

the Principle from which it sprang. Use helps, but do not abuse them.

(c.) *If you have very little time for Prayer, and few opportunities of coming to the Holy Communion, etc., do not be satisfied,* in the sense of wanting nothing more; as if the land of exile were the Jerusalem for which the soul is longing! Do not sink to the level of thinking that a *monthly* Communion, and a quarter of an hour a day for Prayer, are enough. Look upon it as a trial; ask GOD to remove it. Pray for more opportunities. Be willing to make sacrifices, in order to gain them. If, *e. g.*, a servant has to choose between "a good place" as to wages, etc., and "a good place" as to religious opportunities; or if a young girl has to choose between worldly pleasures (involving late hours), and more time for prayer, then the true-hearted child of GOD will *give up* the money or the pleasure.

But on the other hand, *while you cannot gain more opportunities,* through the nat-

ural course of circumstances ordered by GOD, not of your own choosing, *glorify* GOD *by patient waiting*. Do not fall into the great danger of religious people in the present day, of thinking that it is not *possible* to get on without certain spiritual privileges. The LORD GOD, with whom you have to deal, *will* burn the evil out of you, in His own way; He will supply all your need; He will give the strength required, day by day, however few the moments which you are able to spend alone with Him, if only you use them well.

(D.) He will do still more than this! If you have *lost* the precious time in the morning, *through your own fault*, He will still be ready to help you. Do not give up all hope of getting right again, that day. Do not say, *To-morrow*, I hope He will let me come near to Him again; but the moment you have found out your fault, kneel down, tell Him you are sorry, lay your hand, as it were, on the head of "the LAMB

OF GOD, which taketh away the sin of the world," as the Israelites of old laid their hands on the Sin-offering (Lev. iv. 28, 29; St. John i. 29); believe that the morning's omission is forgiven; and "gather up the fragments that remain."

(E.) Remember, *the secret of a miserable day often is, late rising.* And this, perhaps, as the result of *dawdling at night*, wasting the time which ought to have been given to rest. You must not expect a miracle to be wrought for you, when you act contrary to your conscience and to common sense. It is impossible to rise at the right time, fresh for Prayer and Meditation, if you are too late at night. Go to bed at the *right* time. Be very jealous of late hours. The *whole* of the twenty-four hours, every day, belongs to GOD, and must be spent as *He* wishes, not as *we* like. "Thou art about my path, and about my bed." "The day is Thine, and the *night* is Thine." (Ps. cxxxix. 2; lxxiv. 17.)

(F.) Above all, remember that *you are dealing with a Living, Personal Saviour.* Every minute of your life, whether you will or not, is passed in the Presence of ONE who knows all your thoughts, and who *cannot be trifled with.* You may trifle with others, with your friends, your parents, your Minister, the whole Church, but you *cannot* trifle with JESUS CHRIST. "Be not deceived; GOD is not mocked." (Gal. vi. 7.) HE sees you as clearly now, as in that Day when we must all *appear* (*i. e.*, be made manifest) before the Judgment Seat of CHRIST." (2 Cor. v. 10; Heb. iv. 13.) Remember the *living* LORD!

But remember that He is also a *Loving* LORD. He knows your heart; He knows all your past history; how, with some of you, years of carelessness have bound such chains of sinful habits about you that you can never make your life what it might have been. But He forgives fully, freely, forever, and at once! (Micah vii. 9.)

Try, in the every-day difficulties of your religious life, to believe this: that the LORD whom you serve was not more near to St. Peter on the sea, or to Mary Magdalene in the garden, or to the penitent sinner in Simon's house, than He is to each of *you*. His eye is on you; His Heart is with you; and He will comfort, help, and guide, according to the heart's need of every one of you.

He has for each of you an individual, personal care. He is "THE SAME, YESTERDAY, AND TO-DAY, AND FOREVER."

He knows all your present circumstances, He knows your bodily strength, your worldly temptations, your home difficulties. He knows how far it is *impossible* for you to keep the rules which you desire to observe. He knows *all*. He will give you such earthly help as He may see to be necessary for you. Above all, He will give you HIMSELF.

And no offering that you could bring will

please Him so much as the simple trust of a little child. Come to Him *as a little child*, day by day, and He will lay His Hand on you, and say, each time you thus come to Him, whether you *feel* His Presence, or not: "Fear not! I am He which liveth, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen."

Yet, as years roll on, all experience teaches us that it is only *too* possible to be earnest Workers, and regular Communicants, while we have *never really humbled ourselves to receive the Saviour:* hoping, vaguely hoping, *some* day, to get right!

Death is not terrible to all men. It is wonderful to see how the decay of Nature prepares the way for it.

But what comes *after* Death? "It is appointed unto men once to die, but *after* this, the JUDGMENT!" (Heb. ix. 27.) After those few hours of sickness and dying (even if *any* warning be given us), we

shall not go before GOD as a Class or a Congregation, but alone, — *one by one!*

There will *probably* be great differences as to the *degree* of happiness, in the World to come. But one thing is so important, that all other things pass out of sight: ARE WE RECONCILED TO GOD?

All that I have said has *taken for granted* that you *have* received the Saviour — that each night you lie down at Peace with GOD through JESUS CHRIST.

If it *is* thus, well with you, thank GOD! Do not allow anything to hinder you from giving up all your life and strength to extend the blessing to others. *Souls unsaved are dying all around;* and *you*, by your prayers and efforts, *may save them!*

But, whether suddenly or gradually, whether with more or less of assurance and comfort, the blessing of a SALVATION RECEIVED is a subject so important, that even at the end of this "Guide," in which

I have taken for granted throughout, what the Prayer Book takes for granted throughout, that this blessing is already yours, I go back and say, to each of you, — Have *you* received CHRIST as your SAVIOUR? Have *you* ever humbled yourself before GOD, and received Pardon for your sins? Have *you* yielded your Will to Him? *If you were going to appear before God to-night, what would become of your soul?*

IS IT WELL WITH THEE?

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